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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR REVIEWS KEY HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES IN
MEETING WITH UN OHCHR CHIEF

REF: A. JAKARTA 01647

[1](#)B. JAKARTA 01785

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[1](#)1. (U) Summary: On July 11, Ambassador Hume met with visiting UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour. The meeting was wide-ranging and candid, focusing on key human rights issues facing Indonesia. Both the Ambassador and Arbour agreed that Indonesia generally has made strides in protecting human rights, although the Indonesian security forces needed to make further progress. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (U) Ambassador Hume met July 11 with UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour, who was visiting Indonesia July 9-12 at the invitation of the Indonesian government. On July 10 in Bali, Arbour opened the 14th Annual Workshop on the Framework on Regional Cooperation for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Asia-Pacific Region. She used that meeting to energize participants from the ten ASEAN countries to work toward agreement on a regional human rights declaration and framework mechanism. Arbour also held meetings in Jakarta on July 11 with the Department of Foreign Affairs, human rights groups, and UN agencies. She visited Aceh on July 12, returning to Jakarta to meet with President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono on July 13. Arbour's visit follows the recent assessment trip of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders Hina Jilani to Indonesia from June 5-12, 2007 (Ref A).

CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM

[1](#)3. (SBU) The Ambassador and High Commissioner shared cautious optimism about the state of human rights in Indonesia. Arbour noted with pleasure the emergence of a new generation of GOI leaders who are more open to discussing past and present domestic abuses compared with past leaders. She believed that this development was supported by the presence of sophisticated, outspoken human rights activists and organizations that operate, largely unimpeded, throughout the country. She also mentioned a lively mass media that was generally permitted to report on sensitive human rights issues. In Arbour's view, the presence of such conditions served as a strong indicator of a fertile environment for continued progress. Cultivating and empowering the forces of change already present in the country could serve as the most productive way for the UN and USG to promote further improvements, she advised.

¶4. (SBU) On the international scene, Arbour has received positive signals from the GOI on its increased willingness to play a leadership role at the Human Rights Council in Geneva. She has encouraged the GOI to this end, while also noting that the GOI should use its influence in the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Non-Aligned Movement. Arbour noted that while the GOI seemed keen to engage bilaterally on economic and social human rights issues, she was disappointed in its inability to press effectively the Government of Malaysia to renegotiate the Memorandum of Understanding on Migrant Workers, signed in May 2006, meant to provide enhanced protections to Indonesian workers in Malaysia.

ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER

¶5. (SBU) Ambassador Hume and Arbour agreed that the GOI's critical shortcoming lies in its failure to fully implement human rights protections and hold violators accountable for past abuses. Indonesia's National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas HAM), for example, has historically excelled at conducting comprehensive investigations into past abuses, but momentum falters once cases reach the Attorney General's Office for prosecution, indicating a lack of political will. The failure to produce accountability for past abuses by the Commission of Truth and Friendship Indonesia-Timor Leste and the Ad Hoc Human Rights Tribunal for East Timor were cited by Arbour as among the most prominent examples of missed opportunities.

ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

¶6. (SBU) Ambassador Hume agreed with Arbour's characterization that the Indonesian Armed Forces (TNI) are the "elephant in the room" when it comes to resolving the country's most critical human rights challenges. Ambassador

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Hume told Arbour that promoting human rights reform among the security forces, both the military and police, was among his highest priorities in his new position. He added that the U.S.-Indonesia military relationship would only grow stronger if the GOI security sector can continue to demonstrate human rights progress and accountability. Arbour enthusiastically welcomed this statement, indicating that the USG was one of the few actors in a position to make a positive impact in this area. She said that curtailing the military's business activities and encouraging greater civilian control of the military were particularly pressing issues.

¶7. (SBU) The Ambassador emphasized the progress made in civil-military relations in recent years, such as the decrease in high-level political appointments for active and retired military personnel and the military's self-imposed prohibition on active personnel seeking elected office. Referring to the recent Human Rights Watch report on abuses in the Papua Highlands, Arbour noted that the incidents cited in the report, while requiring further investigation and possible prosecution, were allegedly perpetrated primarily by the police rather than the military, possibly indicating a shift away from the more systemic TNI abuses witnessed in the past. On the issue of the TNI's limited budget, which necessitates a reliance on military business ventures, the Ambassador noted that U.S. assistance was helping the TNI overcome its structural budgetary obstacles.

¶8. (SBU) Arbour and Ambassador Hume discussed the prospect of expanded Indonesian participation in UN peacekeeping missions. Arbour mentioned Darfur as a possible mission for Indonesian troops (Ref B). Both agreed that unit and individual vetting for past human rights abuses prior to deployment on UN peacekeeping missions could, in time, serve as an additional mechanism for encouraging security sector adherence to recognized human rights standards and practices.

HUME